



Cooking at the roadside, eating by and sleeping in the truck are typical of the lockdown for Shao Tianhui and other truck drivers stranded in Shanghai.



Truck driver Li San cooks a meal over small fires stoked by tree twigs.

The resurgence of COVID-19 in many cities across the country has forced the closure of highways, service stations and toll gates in the national battle to stop the spread of the virus.

Truck drivers have plenty of things to worry about, beyond just eating and sleeping. Many fret that their travel health codes will be marked with a star, which signifies they have been in a COVID-risk region and could limit their range of operations. They also worry that negative nucleic acid test results will expire before they can get another test, complicating their ability to get exit passes.

Trucker Shao Tianhui, who hails from Henan Province, said he never expected to be stranded in Shanghai for such a long time.

In late March, he was transporting a load of construction materials to Shanghai from Yixing in Jiangsu. That was two days before the Pudong New Area was put under lockdown.

By the time the goods were unloaded and he was ready to drive back, his exit routes had been effectively blocked.

"I thought it would just be a couple of days," said Shao, who parked his truck on Chuanji Road to ride out the stoppage.

A week passed. Shao said he realized things would be getting worse before they got better when a lockdown expiration deadline passed without a lifting of restrictions.

He went through all the instant food he had brought along for the trip, then retrieved a stove from a nearby trash bin and started to cook meals over

small fires stoked by twigs and plastic foam. A photographer who happened on the scene gave him a lighter.

"It has been the hardest of times," Shao remarked. "I have never felt so desperate before."

As Chuanji Road grew into a makeshift home for almost 60 drivers and their trucks, the local government started to deliver instant noodles every three days.

Local volunteers showed up with supplies of rice, flour, water, eggs and vegetables.

"I've applied for the pass to leave, and I'm still waiting to hear back on that," Shao said.

Things are looking up. The city's COVID-19 cases are declining. Some

service areas on highways have opened lounge rooms for drivers. More toll gates are resuming operations.

Shanghai transport authorities have opened seven service centers for truck drivers in districts such as Baoshan, Minhang, Fengxian and Pudong to provide nucleic acid tests.

Shanghai Chengtou Group — which manages 500 kilometers of highways in the city, 10 service areas, the East China Sea Bridge and three tunnels across the Huangpu River — revealed that about 211 trucks and 293 drivers are stranded on the highways.

The group has provided nucleic acid tests in eight of its service areas since the lockdown. In five of the areas, shower rooms are available. Facial masks,

instant noodles, milk and bottled water are distributed free to drivers.

In Qingpu, a district that hosts many express delivery stations, the police have turned empty lots into "harbors" for truck drivers, where meals, drinking water, nucleic acid tests and toilets are available.

"Truck drivers are an important part of the country's development," noted Chen Yuefeng, professor of law at East China University of Political Science and Law.

"If they are stranded by government policies, local officials have the obligation to respond to their need for accommodation, food and toilets. Every truck driver should be guaranteed the basic needs of life."



The stranded drivers sometimes have dinner together to liven up their enforced lockdown life as they wait for clearance to get back on the road.



The drivers may be stranded but they never forget to wash their vehicles even amid the COVID-19 lockdown in Shanghai.